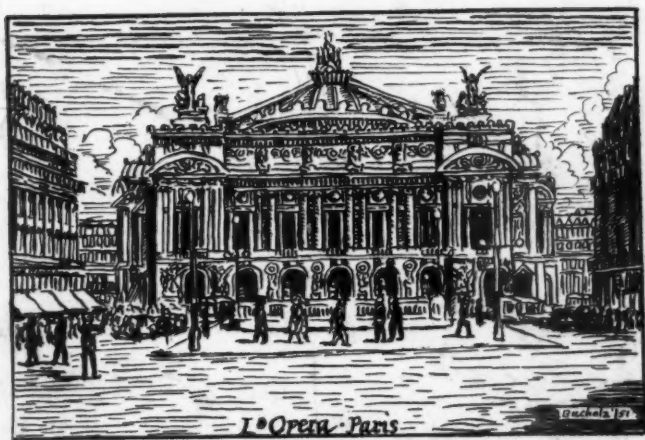


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# The American RECORD GUIDE



L'Opéra - Paris

MAY, 1952

- VOL. 18, No. 9

Edited by

Peter Hugh Reed

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# The American RECORD GUIDE

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MAY, 1952 Vol. XVIII, No. 9

formerly

The American Music Lover

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## Weingartner Memorial Release

**BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 1* (Vienna Philharmonic Orch.) (Columbia LP disc ML-4501); *Symphony No. 2* (London Symphony Orch.) (ML disc 4502); *Symphony No. 3* (Vienna Philharmonic Orch.) (disc ML-4503); *Symphony No. 4* (London Philharmonic Orch.) (disc ML 4504); *Symphony No. 5* (London Philharmonic Orch.) (disc ML-4505); *Symphony No. 6* (Royal Philharmonic Orch.) (disc ML-4506); *Symphony No. 7* (Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra) (disc ML-4507); *Symphony No. 8* (Vienna Philharmonic Orch.) and *Symphony No. 9* (Vienna Philharmonic Orch. with Luise Helletsgruber, Rosette Anday, Georg Maikl, Richard Mayr, and Vienna National Opera Chorus) (LP set SL-164, 2 discs).

**BRAHMS:** *Symphony No. 1* (London Philharmonic Orch.) (disc ML-4510); *Symphony No. 2* (London Philharmonic Orch.) (disc ML-4511); *Symphony No. 3* (London Philharmonic Orch.) (disc ML 4512); *Symphony No. 4* (London Symphony Orch.) (disc ML-4513). All conducted by **Felix Weingartner**.

▲IN PRESERVING for posterity the best of its earlier performances, a record company is rightfully serving the interests of the music listening public and sustaining the artistic function of the phonograph — which is a living source material of both past and present interpretative artistry as well as music in sound. These restorations on LPs of Weingartner's nine Beethoven and four Brahms symphonies, which offer some remarkable engineering work, constitute a logical project of its kind by its sponsors.

It has been said that these re-issues represent a sentimental venture. If esteem of a noted musician of the past can be interpreted as sentimentality, then one has to admit that admiration should not be regarded as a human trait of durability and strength. It seems to me that the true motivation behind this Memorial Edition was an unmistakably enduring esteem for a noted conductor's artistry — voiced from many quarters — and that this, rather than sentiment, prompted Columbia to re-issue these thirteen sym-

(Continued on page 291)

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# THE FUNNY SIDE OF THE PHONOGRAPH WORLD

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By Ulysses "Jim" Walsh

## Part II

▲VICTOR'S English affiliate, the Gramophone Company, also manufactured type writers in its early days, when it was known as the Gramophone and Typewriter Company, Ltd. But how many present-day record collectors know that the old Victor Talking Machine Company at one time manufactured cigars? That surprising statement is made on the authority of an item in the *Talking Machine News* for December, 1905: "The Victor Talking Machine Company, U. S. A., has brought out a cigar called His Majesty's Voice. (No doubt this should be His Master's Voice — U. W.) The company's staff are just now regaling themselves with the new Regalia and the staff of the Gramophone Company of London think it would be well if a similar step were taken in this country. The report does not disclose if the brand is to be manufactured by the Victor Company in sufficiently large quantities for sale to the public."

I doubt that the cigar ever was put on the market, but it's interesting to know that such a thing was ever contemplated.

### *That "Dog Fight" Record*

From the introduction of radio (and now TV), millions of weary householders complained about neighbors running their sets full-tilt. And from the introduction of electric recording (1925), innumerable irate citizens were subjected late at night to the jungle rhythms of swing bands, the maudlin moans of crooners and even such hoity-toity stuff as the *Gods building the*

*bridge to Vahalla* at roof-raising volume. These are things that could not be, or were not, effectively recorded before the days of the microphone.

Even as long ago as 1905 the phonograph could be an instrument of torture. In fact, that was just what it was frequently considered. Witness the letter which a justly annoyed gentleman wrote to a metropolitan newspaper:

"A dozen times a day a dog-fight in its most realistic form is performed, apparently to the unalloyed delight of my neighbors. A hoarse-voiced 'tough' announces the terms of the fight in tones only possessed by that variety of mankind of which he is a representative. 'Stop that dog, please!' he calls out again and again, as his eloquence is interrupted by the barking and yelping of the dogs, and the crowd he is addressing yells in impatience for the fight to begin. At last the fight is on, and if you were actually assisting at it, in defiance of the penal code, you could hardly get a more realistic sense of the elevating amusement. The talking machine tells the whole story. If the dog fight was actually taking place on the lawn, and the refuse of humanity had gathered there to see it, the proceedings would hardly be more real than they seem in this machine reproduction. I have never had the privilege of witnessing a dog fight, but from repeated hearing of that phonograph I feel as though I had now subjected myself to criminal arrest for violating the law by sneaking into that sort of ring."

*The American Record Guide*

The complained-of record was *A Scene at a Dog Fight*, made in the early 1900's by Len Spencer, the most ingenious and imaginative of all the old-time recording artists, and the animal imitator, Gilbert Girard. If Len and Gil knew of that letter, they probably were pleased by the backhanded compliment which the correspondent paid to the fidelity of their recorded work.

### *Joe Had No Birds*

The husky and hearty Billy Murray—in his day one of the most popular singers and comedians—was full of funny anecdotes which he gleefully related. One deals with the time when Victor decided to make an electric re-recording of *The Warbler's Serenade* and *The Whistler and His Dog*, by Pryor's Band. Billy, an expert whistler, was called on to furnish part of the whistling effects. Joe Belmont, "the Human Bird," a genial gentleman who today operates a bird and kennel shop in the concourse of Radio City, was his associate. Joe began making records in 1894, when he was 18, and was one of the best known pioneers in the specialized field of singing, playing, talking or whistling for wax cylinders.

On this afternoon in 1925, the customary rehearsal was held. Then everything was arranged for the actual recording. Arthur Pryor and his boys performed according to schedule, and so did Billy, but when Joe tried to give his familiar bird imitations not a sound emerged. He pursed and puckered his lips and struggled manfully, but not a chirp! Knowing Joe of old, Billy and the recording director cowered, anticipating the earth-shaking explosion which they were certain would signify Mr. Belmont's displeasure. But whatever Joe thought, he didn't say anything. Instead, he had another try, with the same negative results. He had several more. Then Joe turned to the director and, with a faint, sweet, saintly smile transfiguring his features, he gently remarked:

"I have no birds!"

Having said which, he left the room and had gone down in an elevator before anybody could stop him. After the boys recovered from the shock they 'phoned to

Margaret (Mickey) McKee, daughter of Frank McKee, the dance orchestra leader, and got her to take Joe's place. When the secret of Mr. Belmont's unprecedented resignation came out, it was learned that he had become a convert to Christian Science and had struggled manfully—and successfully—to keep his untoward emotions under control.

Billy Murray also has many diverting recollections of the days, from twenty to thirty years ago, when he was a member of that happy-go-lucky concert troupe billed as the Eight Famous Victor Artists. The organization was managed by Henry Burr, the most popular ballad singer of his day. Usually, when traveling by train from one engagement to another, the elephantine Mr. Burr kept much to himself, worrying about how his genuinely beautiful voice would sound that night. The seven amused themselves in various ways.

For one thing, they decided to annoy "Hank," whenever he condescended to join them, by saying in tones just loud enough for him to overhear distinctly: "Man on the roof!" Burr interpreted this, as he was meant to do, for a signal that the troupe had been criticizing him and his management methods, and that "Man on the roof!" was an agreed upon signal to drop the subject when he was seen coming. On one occasion he took the carefully modulated mutter so much to heart that he rolled up his sleeves and remarked: "Got me on the pan again, eh? Well, I've had enough of this talk behind my back! Come on! I'll take you all on one at a time!"

### *The Order of Beards*

But the prize goat-getter was the Order of Beards. For purposes of innocent amusement, the other members of the Eight provided themselves with false beards—some red and some black—as well as small hatchets. They would then prowl through the other cars of the train, muttering in their beards, pretending to be anarchist Reds and sometimes scaring nervous passengers into fits. Burr didn't learn of the Order for a while, but when he did he was hurt because he hadn't been

made a member. Eventually he said: "Boys, I think you ought to let me belong to your secret order! After all, I'm your manager, and I'm your pal!"

Murray replied: "Well, Hank, we've just been talking it over, and we've decided to hold a meeting this afternoon and vote on your application for membership. We'll let you know when we get together!"

"Thanks, boys", Burr replied. "I'd sure appreciate it if you'd let me join."

At the next stop, Monroe Silver, the "Cohen" monologist, got off the train and bought some pieces of licorice. That afternoon everybody except Burr met in a compartment. They kept Hank outside on the anxious seat for two hours while they pretended to debate his qualifications. Finally, Murray emerged, holding a hat. "I'm sorry, Hank," he softly said.

Burr's florid face turned an even deeper red. "You mean," he said, "I was —"

"Yes, Harry," Billy gently replied, "you were blackballed. Look!" He showed that the hat contained seven tiny black pellets — made from the licorice which "Mike" Silver had bought.

Burr's flush deepened. "Do you mean to say," he rasped, "that not a single one of you so-and-so's voted for me?"

Billy seemed almost on the point of tears as he replied: "No, old pal, I'm sorry, but we all voted against you! We thought it was our duty!"

The resulting explosion was so great that the boys thought it politic to let Harry H. McClaskey (that was Burr's real name) know immediately that they were only joking and that he had been unanimously elected to the Order of Beards.

#### *"Burr's Humor"*

In spite of Burr's seeming gullibility, he had a strong sense of humor. Billy Murray says that one of the funniest things he has ever seen was the tenor's impersonation of a pompous after-dinner speaker afflicted with gas on the stomach. Says Billy: "I've seen Hank do that stunt hundreds of times and laughed my head off every time!" Harry also had a trick of lying down on a station platform just before his train was to pull out and pretend to be helplessly drunk. About the time

somebody summoned a policeman to come "take charge of the fat man," Burr would jump up and gleefully board the train.

He was also an excellent man of business, who delighted in hardboiled, across-the-table financial arguments with phonograph company officials. But he was not a good public speaker. His manner was hesitant and he was easily flustered.

A memorable instance of this failing occurred when the troupe was the guest of a party of Victor jobbers. After some remarks of welcome, Burr was called on to respond. Near him sat tiny little Albert Campbell, his singing partner. Al, only a bit more than five feet tall, was blinking sleepily. He had had a stormy session with Burr earlier in the day over a contract and had wound up with a violent headache. Although he was a tee-totaller he had acted on somebody's suggestion that a glass or two of a mildly alcoholic beverage might chase the headache. What it did was to get him "lit up."

#### *"Go 'Way Back an' Sit Down!"*

As Burr rose and began to stammer a few halting remarks, Al was still brooding over what he considered his wrongs. And then he suddenly piped up, in that high, lyric tenor voice which lent beauty for so many years to the singing of the Peerless Quartet:

"Aw, go 'way back an' sit down, you pot-bellied Canadian thus-and-so-on!"

The assemblage was spellbound at hearing such language from Al, who ordinarily didn't swear any more than he drank. But his scurrilous outburst — particularly the revelation of his previously submerged patriotic resentment of Burr's Canadian birth — was too much for everyone's gravity. Burr fell speechless into his chair and didn't make another remark the whole evening, while Al, satisfied that he had done his duty, went to sleep.

Manager Burr bided his time, and didn't consider that he had evened the score until he hoodwinked Campbell, while the troupe was on a tour in Texas, into violating his Catholic tenets by eating chili con carne on Friday. Then all was forgiven.

These reminiscences of the phonograph's funny side may well end with



another story about Thomas A. Edison. During phonograph's prime, Mr. Edison installed an expert committee to criticize artists and pass upon the qualities of records. One of the committee members, the late Frank Cronkhite, was particularly disliked by many artists, who considered his critical methods to be downright brutal in their severity. Their attitude was expressed by one old-timer, who asked another (in my presence) if Cronkhite were still alive. Told "I don't know," he replied: "Well, if we find out he is alive, let's go and kill him tomorrow!" On the other hand, some Edison veterans defend Cronkhite — an old-time circus musician, who always made motions as if he were fingering a cornet when he discussed music — on the ground that he was "just trying to please the Old Man and get a good record!" when he picked an interpretation to pieces.

#### *The Great American Tenor*

However that may have been, the artists suspected that the "expert committee" didn't know a great deal about music. Thus it happened that while Edison was conducting a search for good recording voices, Byron Harlan, a tenor best known for his blackface comedy work, entered into a conspiracy with an Edison staff accompanist. Harlan had the knack of sounding as if he were singing in almost any foreign language he chose although he didn't know any of them. So he recorded a mass of pseudo-operatic stuff, with plenty of ear-splitting high notes and what-not, which was meant to sound as if it were sung in Italian, and the accompanist kept up with him as best he could. The next time the expert committee met to consider recordings by ambitious singers, the accompanist produced the farrago of nonsense Harlan had made. Said he: "I've found the great American tenor! Listen!"

He played the record, and Mr. Edison and the committee listened. "Wonderful!" exclaimed one. "Did you ever hear such a marvelous range?" intoned another. "And his diction — every word is as clear as crystal!" said the third.

May, 1952

The record played through. "Now," said the accompanist, "I'll tell you something. Do you want to know who the great American tenor is? It's old Byron Harlan, of the Collins and Harlan team! He wasn't singing anything from opera — and he wasn't even singing in any language!"

Mr. Edison exploded in robust mirth. Whenever he saw Harlan after that, he bowed low and said: "Ah, the great American tenor!" (When Byron was married, the inventor gave him the then latest model Edison cylinder phonograph as a wedding present, and when Mr. and Mrs. Harlan's daughter was graduated from high school, he presented her with an Official Model Diamond Disc instrument. Bill Hayes, the genial manager of Edison's phonograph and radio repair department, had just finished repairing the cylinder machine for Mrs. Harlan when I visited the Edison laboratory a few months ago.)

That trick of Harlan's, I might say, reminds me of one I played myself years ago on a group of women who had been badly bitten by the folk music bug. They would listen to nothing but what they termed "the pure, undefiled folk" and were particularly vehement in their denunciations of jazz and everything else which, they said, bore "the cloven-footed, commercialized impress of Broadway."

One day I respectfully asked leave to play for them a fine old bit of Swedish folk music. As a baritone voice proceeded to do some lusty piping, sighs of rapture greeted me. "Exquisite!" said the ladies. "Not," I said, "in the least like Broadway, is it?" "Oh, heavens, no!" they replied.

The record ended, and I displayed the label. The song's Swedish title was "Varan Bal," which translated into English became "Everybody's Doin' It." The composer was Irving Berlin.

There was dank silence for a few moments. Then one of the ladies brightened. "Well," she said, "it's possible for even a trashy writer like Berlin to have an occasional inspiration. I still say that sounds exactly like old Swedish folk music!"

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## Mahler's 8th Symphony

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**MAHLER:** *Symphony No. 8 in E major*; Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Kammerchor, Singakademie, Sangerknaben, Elsa Matheis (soprano), Daniza Ilitsch (soprano), Rosette Anday (alto), Georgine Milinkovic (alto), Erich Majkut (tenor), Georg Oegg (baritone), Hugo Wiener (bass), Franz Schutz (organ), conducted by Hermann Scherchen. Columbia LP set SL-164, 2 discs, \$10.90.

▲EVER SINCE Stokowski performed this work in the spring of 1950 with the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra countless music listeners have asked me either in person or by letter — "isn't Columbia going to release the Stokowski performance of the Mahler *Eighth* . . . surely, they recorded it!" The expense of such an undertaking in this country has evidently prevented more than one record company from acquiring a performance of a symphony that requires such tremendous forces. Besides a large orchestra, with quintuple woodwind and many extra instruments, and eight soloists, the work has large mixed choirs and a boys' chorus. The appellation of "the symphony of a thousand" is exaggerated — especially in the present case — but one understands, considering the size of its forces, why a German impresario labelled it so.

The term "symphony" has grown through the years to have many meanings — its original Greek signification (once discussed in this magazine by the late Sydney Grew) meant simply a "coming together of sounds." Mahler chose to call this his *Eighth Symphony* perhaps because neither symphonic-oratorio or "Miniature music-drama," as one writer labels it, really described what he had in mind. One has to make a study of the man and his own study of the symphony as a form, even to *Das Lied von der Erde* which is called by many his tenth symphony. The present work is divided into two parts which somehow do not artistically mate in per-

fect manner. The opening section is a setting of the Latin hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and the second part is a setting of the final scene from Goethe's *Faust*. Voices predominate, because the text of both parts are of the utmost importance to the motivation of the composer's creative urge. I think Virgil Thomson, in his review of the 1950 Stokowski performance, has summed up the work so succinctly that his words may be repeated here: "The symphony holds together as a musical piece and expresses its author's deepest religious impulses, as well as cultural convictions. A Master workman, he gave to this word his utmost of seriousness and inspiration. It is a statue to his memory, if not his finest music."

It is well to remember that Mahler became an ardent Catholic in his early years and was deeply engrossed with religious mysticism. No notes are given with this set, but the words of both parts with translation are included. The interested listener can thus formulate his own opinion of the composer's motivation for these texts.

As grateful as any Mahler admirer can be for a performance of this work on records, this reproduced offering is far from being fully satisfying, and to one who owns a recorded version taken from the air of the Stokowski presentation it leaves much to be desired. The present performance was recorded at the Vienna International Music Festival Concert House, 1951. In it, one is reminded again and again of the presence of the audience, and at the end the applause is included. The breaks in the second section are very abrupt and a bit disconcerting on first acquaintance.

Scherchen is regarded in Europe as one of the foremost Mahler interpreters and this is borne out in the second section, which remains the only satisfactory part of this performance. The first section suffers from the blanketing of the orchestra by the voices and in its later sections by the dominating voice of a shrill soprano, a condition which does not prevail in the Stokowski performance. The delicacy of Scherchen's orchestral direc-

(Continued on page 299)



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# Record Notes and Reviews

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THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

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## Orchestra

**CARPENTER:** *Adventures in a Perambulator*; **Vienna State Orchestra** conducted by **Henry Swoboda**; **CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN VIOLIN MUSIC:** *Blues* (Still); *Here's One* (Still); *Xkelele Serenade* (Copland); *Hoe Down* (Copland); **Louis Kaufman** (violin); with **Annette Kaufman** at the piano. Concert Hall LP disc. CHS-1140, \$5.95.

▲THE LATE John Alden Carpenter's whimsical fancy, depicting the adventures of an infant in a perambulator, in the course of his day's walk with his nurse, suggests a rather precocious child despite the charm of the orchestration employed to give credence to the events. When first presented in 1914, this score soon found success, but through the years it has not endured in the orchestral repertory. Like all of Carpenter's music, there is charm and refinement in the workmanship though enjoyment would seem contingent on acceptance of the program which is a bit implausible.

In most libraries, I suspect this work would remain a *piece d'occasion*, for Carpenter's impressionism seems a bit faded today. Swoboda's performance is quite

orderly and straightforward, and the recording lifelike.

It is rather unfortunate that the Carpenter work had to extend to side 2, as it runs smack into Mr. Kaufman's American pieces to which it bears no relation. This is hardly fair to Mr. Carpenter or to Mr. Kaufman. Incidentally, these violin pieces have a distinctive flavor of their own and Kaufman and his wife play them very well indeed. The pieces were originally issued on Concert Hall's LP disc CHC-85 in a program of International and American "favorites for the violin."

—P. H. R.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68 (Pastoral)*; **Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera** conducted by **Hermann Scherchen**. Westminster LP disc WL-5108, \$5.95.

▲BEETHOVEN was perhaps ill advised when he proceeded to give his *Pastoral Symphony* a program even though he qualified it by adding that the music was "more the expression of feeling than a painting." Too many times, individual scenes have been cutely pointed up, reducing the music to the level of Rossini's *Overture to William Tell* or the *Prelude to the Incidental Music for Shakespeare's Tempest* by Sibelius.

Hermann Scherchen, one of Europe's most eminent conductors, views the work correctly as inspired by Nature but not meant to convey a series of discrete nature

images. There is a minimum stress on the program and maximum emphasis on the growth of musical ideas. From the first note to the last, it is a delightful experience. One's pleasure is heightened by the excellent technical reproduction. —B.L.

**BRAHMS:** *Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98; Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of N.Y. conducted by Bruno Walter.* Columbia LP disc ML-4472, \$5.45.

▲MOST conductors stress the lyrical, sing Brahms in this work, building up the dynamics to the proper climaxes, and let it go at that. The results are often satisfactory and effective. In this recording, Walter (essentially a romantic conductor) seems to lean in the direction of classicism with the result that the music often tends to sound diffuse and the unity of the conception is lost. The third movement comes off best. For my own part, I would prefer Walter's more genial and better unified performance with the B.B.C. Symphony (Victor set 242 — no longer available).

Technically, the recording sounds muddy at times, and does not always seem to have the usual, fine balance of Columbia's orchestral recording. Curiously, the reproduction of the third movement comes off best. —B.L.

**DEBUSSY:** *Three Nocturnes; RAVEL: Rapsodie Espagnole; Orchestre de la Suisse Romande conducted by Ernest Ansermet;* London LP disc, LL 530, \$5.95.

▲IT IS Ansermet's thesis that Debussy's music is strong, virile and plain-speaking. In this age of musical sentimentality it is refreshing to hear a re-evaluation at once so iconoclastic and so apt. He conducts the famous *Nocturnes* according to his opinions and it emerges a new score with none of the rosy clouds, skipping marches and languid sirens familiar in other performances. Instead, *Nuages* is of a steely gray texture with every note audible, *Fetes* is a truly joyous scherzo, and *Sirènes* is a complex mosaic of ceaseless motion through which are heard the almost terrifying calls of unseen voices.

This conductor usually takes his works more slowly than most. Sometimes this does not particularly befit the music, as in his recent reading of *Sacre*; sometimes, as in this Ravel, it virtually illuminates the score. I have never heard the *Rapsodie* played more slowly, nor have I ever heard a more electrifying performance.

I am not particularly pleased with the recording, even after trying it on several different machines. The volume level of recording is very low and while each leading instrument is distinct there is a muffled quality in the whole which while making for a very glossy sound does not do credit to the obvious attention lavished on the details of both scores. —D. R.

**DITTERSDORF:** *Symphony in A minor; Frankenland State Symphony Orchestra conducted by Erich Kloss; LOUIS FERDINAND OF HOHENZOLLERN: Rondo for Piano and Orchestra; Otto A. Graef with same orchestra.* Lyricord LP disc. LL-26, \$5.95.

▲SOMEBODY once said of Dittersdorf's string quartets that they "have the drawback of being unconscionably dear," which can be interpreted in more than one way. The point is, however, that string players find his quartets attractive but strangely only one of these works ever found its way on to records. Karl Ditters (1739-1799), who tacked von Dittersdorf to his name, was born in Vienna where he established himself favorably at the court. He was a gifted violinist who wrote popular operas besides chamber works and symphonies. Tovey evidently thought well enough of him to revive one of his symphonies, which is discussed in Tovey's Vol. IV of *Essays in Musical Analysis*. The present symphony will come as a pleasant surprise to many, I believe, for it has true spontaneity and plenty of good humor, and is a solidly written example of its form by a contemporary of Haydn and Mozart. If one desires to be critical, it can be pointed out that the Adagio does not strike very deeply and seems a bit lengthy. Further acquaintance with it may alter that opinion. The fact that Erich Kloss's performance of this work, consistently vital

and rhythmically fluent, makes for enjoyment in listening. Lyrichord would seem to have struck a first-rate orchestra and leader in this new combine on records. We are told the Frankenland State Symphony Orchestra is the center of musical activity in Nuremberg. I would say that Nuremberg could be justly proud of this organization.

The Rondo for piano is hardly in the same class as the von Dittersdorf symphony, though it is an amusing historical curiosity. Its composer was Prince Louis Ferdinand, nephew of Frederick the Great. The Prince, a noted warrior who was killed on the battle field at 36, may have been regarded as the greatest composer among the Hohenzollerns, but his rondo is slight stuff at best. It suggests he was an accomplished pianist and also that he was a similar equestrian, for this music which has spontaneity and sparkle conveys to me an enjoyment of fine horsemanship. The pianist is a very capable artist, who keeps the music live and bright as it should be, though it might advantageously have been shortened a bit. —P. H. R.

**DVORAK:** *Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 95 (New World); Chicago Symphony Orchestra* conducted by **Rafael Kubelik**. Mercury LP disc MG-50002, \$5.95.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36; Chicago Symphony Orchestra* conducted by **Rafael Kubelik**. Mercury LP disc MG-50003, \$5.95.

▲**KUBELIK'S** performances of these staples of the concert hall show his sterling qualities as a conductor — incisiveness, rhythmic fluency and admirable subtlety in phrasing. The orchestral playing is always well ordered but never exploited for the sake of virtuosity. To my way of thinking, there is a welcome freedom from "being different" in these performances, no conscious effort at any time to best the other fellow — meaning the competitors who have already recorded these works. This is the fifth LP version of the "New World," and the sixth of the Tchaikovsky *Fourth*. One would like to report that Kubelik's versions belong at the head of the class, but such is not the truth. Some

may prefer them to all others, but I think the Stokowski and Jorda versions of the "New World" and the Koussevitzky and Scherchen versions of the Tchaikovsky offer keen competition to these new releases. Stokowski's excellently recorded "New World" has a vehemence and vitality all its own, while Jorda's — less admirable as a performance — offers equally as fine recording as the present disc which is representative of the best in modern recording technique. The same is also true of the Scherchen performance of the Tchaikovsky (Westminster 5096). The review discs sent to us had disturbingly noisy grooves throughout. —P.H.R.

**FALLA:** *The Three Cornered Hat* (complete); **L'Orchestre de l'Opera-Comique, Paris** conducted by **Jean Martinon** with **Amparito Peris de Pruliere** (soprano). Urania LP disc URLP-7034, 15.95.

▲**THE MANY** lovers of this fine score have long awaited its complete recording. Though played and recorded well enough, I am afraid it will disappoint in some ways. Martinon's tempi and rhythm are somewhat sluggish and this gives an impression throughout of concern more with weight than with color. Amparito Peris de Pruliere sings the few measures allotted to her with that special kind of vocal acidity that seems just right for this music.

I suspect that the above warning will keep few from trying this disc. But at the same time, I imagine that most listeners will want to return to Iturbi's interpretation of the familiar concert excerpts for the tonal verve and passionate accents we associate with de Falla's masterpiece of the theater. —C. J. L.

**GOLDMARK:** *Rustic Wedding Symphony, Op. 26; Vienna State Opera Orchestra* conducted by **Henry Swoboda**. Concert Hall LP disc 1138, \$5.95.

▲**IN THE LIGHT** of modern times, Carl Goldmark's *Rustic Wedding* (a suite rather than a symphony) remains a rather innocuous, gentle, completely sentimental and typically romantic program work of its period (1857). It is doubtful that it has been included in concert hall programs

for long years. Our grandparents were probably subjected to it in their less adventuresome times. Its five movements are entitled: *Wedding March*; *Bridal Song*; *Serenade*; *In the Garden*; and *Dance*. It all has to do with rustic life, the wedding of two peasants, and can be praised for its simpleheartedness and lack of pretension. Swoboda does justice to the music, keeping it alive and forthright. The recording is excellent. —J.N.

**HANDEL:** *Water Music* (complete); **Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Fritz Lehmann**. Decca LP disc DL-9594, \$5.85.

▲**SIR** Hamilton Harty must have had a difficult time choosing six numbers from Handel's complete *Water Music* for his well known arrangement. All 20 sections contain some elements for the memory — exquisite airs, surprising rhythmic changes a huge variety of harmonic textures lovely to the ear.

Fritz Lehmann reads these pieces with scholarly devotion and conducts with a light and graceful hand. A certain lack of rhythmic alacrity here and there and a recording which emphasizes a deficiency of tonal vitamins, however, makes his work really no more effective than Richard Bales' on the WCFM LP disc. Surprisingly enough, Bales' men play with a greater sonic splendor and a closer adherence to pitch at all times than the Berliners. This is particularly true of the wind and brass players. — C. J. L.

**HAYDN:** *Symphony No. 96 in D and Symphony No. 98 in B flat*; **Orchestra Of the Vienna State Opera** conducted by **Hermann Scherchen**. Westminster LP disc WL-5111, \$5.95.

▲**HERE** is hearty, robust music making, the sort we have come to expect when Scherchen conducts Haydn. The symphonies represented here are of the London group and needless to add of the first quality. The *B flat symphony*, a shade richer than its discmate, will be remembered from the Victor 78 version conducted by Toscanini. The Italian maestro's performance has a lightness, a sparkle, a seemingly greater feeling for the high wit

present in the corner movements than Scherchen's reading. It would be difficult, however, to surpass the German conductor's feeling for and communication of the great elegaic slow movement, which Tovey called Haydn's requiem for Mozart.

The *D major symphony*, sometimes dubbed "The Miracle," is very well performed and well up to the best standards we have known. Westminster's recording of both works is satisfactory, but it is not as luminous and clear of sound as others the company has released in this series. —C. J. L.

**IBERT:** *Escales (Ports of Call)*; **BERLIOZ:** *Damnation of Faust — Dance of the Sylphs*; **SIBELIUS:** *The Swan of Tuonela*; **GRANADAS:** *Goyescas — Intermezzo*; **Leopold Stokowski** and his **Orchestra**. Victor 10" LP disc LM-151, \$4.45.

▲**IBERT'S** impressionistic musical tour of the Mediterranean often has intensity of coloring which Mr. Stokowski exploits very well. The conductor seems to have made some slight changes in the scoring and some alterations in the composer's dynamic markings — in one case making a sweeping run on the harp reminiscent of Debussy in *Festivals*. The conductor's performances of the evocative *Swan of Tuonela* (with Mitchell Miller playing the English horn), the sentimental *Intermezzo* from *Goyescas*, and the *Dance of the Sylphs* (all of which previously appeared on 45 rpm discs) are most effectively performed. The beauty of tone achieved in the Sibelius and the exquisite delicacy in the Berlioz are cherishable examples of this conductor's art. The recordings are all excellent. —J. N.

**MASSENET:** *Scenes Pittoresques*; **Radio Berlin Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by **Leopold Ludwig**; **SAINT-SAENS:** *Concert Piece for Harp and Orchestra, Op. 154*; **Jeannette Helmis** (harp); **Radio Berlin Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by **Heinz Mahlke**. Urania LP disc, UURLP 7039, \$5.95.

▲**MASSENET** wrote seven suites for orchestra, all of them dealing with the

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picturesque. This is the fourth and consists of a lively *marche*, a charming ballet-like *valse*, an *angélus* which is a bit saccharine in its familiarity, and a spirited and typical *fete bohème*. Massenet's music, always redolent of 19th-century French opera diluted by the cooling sobriety of the Conservatoire, is here a bit distinctive in that the work is excellent popular music. The performance, grave and spritely by turns, serves the score well. The recording is a bit fuzzy.

Hearing late Saint-Saëns is always a bit like eating cotton-candy. It is utterly delicious but after only a few seconds nothing whatever remains. Technique the composer certainly had but, at the age of 84, the year of the harp piece, he had very little else and the definite sustenance that makes such a work as the early *Danse Macabre* live is sadly missing. The performance is very slick and Miss Helmi's technique matches that of the composer. In the recording she is naturally given prominence but the accompanying instruments are well represented. —D.R.

**MOZART:** *Ballet Music for the Pantomime — Les Petits Riens* K.299b; **Pro Musica Orchestra, Stuttgart**, conducted by **Rolf Reinhardt**; *Ballet Music for Idomeneo* K.367; **Pro Musica Orchestra, Stuttgart**, conducted by **Wilhelm Seegelman**. Vox LP disc PL-7250, \$5.95.

▲OF THESE two sets of ballet music, the *Idomeneo* — better Mozart — is better played, and has the benefit of superior technical reproduction. The music for *Les Petits Riens*, written when Mozart was twenty-two for three silly pantomimed episodes brought the composer neither money nor recognition in his own day; even now, it does not add particularly to his stature.

Reinhardt's conducting of *Les Petits Riens* is lackadaisical, heavy-handed, with no nuances and with amateurish dynamics. His tempos are untrue to the spirit of the music. Forgetting that Mozart was describing "petit riens," the conductor tries to make the music sound impressive and fails dismally. For a proper and spirited reading of this music, one

should turn to the odd side of Period's recording of *Clemenza di Tito* (Period 550).

Both performances are examples of what happens when not enough thought and practice enter into the preparation of an orchestra before performance. Technically, the recording just passes muster.

—B.L.

**MOZART:** *Serenade No. 9 in D major, K. 320 (Posthorn)*; **L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande** conducted by **Peter Maag**. London LP disc LLP-502, \$5.95.

▲THOSE who missed the earlier recording (Haydn Society disc 1012) of this remarkable opus will do well to hasten out and hear this disc. For it is one of Mozart's most delightful serenades, festive in spirit and symphonic in texture, employing a larger orchestra than usual in such works. Mozart wrote it in 1779, after his return from visits to Mannheim and Paris, and the music has many points of stylistic advancement as a result of that trip. Einstein points out that its opening movement anticipates that of the "Prague" symphony, to come six years later. For some reason, Mozart used an old posthorn in his second minuet (hence the sobriquet), possibly as a hint to the Archbishop of Salzburg that he wanted to get away again. The old horn adds a joyous note of its own and in its way suggests a Mozart chuckle. Anson W. Peckham, reviewing the earlier disc (July 1950 issue), spoke of the instrument at some length ("the granddaddy of the cornet").

I cannot say when I have been so delighted with a Mozart work of this kind in a long time. Maag gives a vital and ingratiating performance. He is never guilty of taking "the line of least resistance in molding a phrase" like his predecessor. London's reproduction is excellent in every way.

—P.H.R.

**MUSSORGSKY:** *Night on Bald Mountain; Boris Godunov — Polonaise; Khovanchina — Entr'acte & Persian Dances*; **Berlin Philharmonic Orch.** conducted by **Leopold Ludwig**; **RIMSKY-KORSAKOV:** *Snow Maiden — Ballet Music; Symphony Orchestra of Radio Berlin* conducted by **Leopold**

Ludwig. Urania LP disc URLP-7035, \$5.95.

▲TO DO justice to the untrammelled imagination of Mussorgsky, — the wild drama of *Bald Mountain*, the magnificent pomp of the *Polonaise from Boris*, the smooth strains of *Khovanchina* — an orchestra of tremendous expressive dimensions is needed with a master tone painter at the helm. In these respects, Ludwig and the two orchestras he directs are pre-eminent. This record sets a new high in transferring vividly orchestral sonorities, unsurpassed for their spacious breadth, exciting depth, and alluring reach. Seldom is such a mighty tonal canvas unfurled as the satanic *Night on Bald Mountain*, with its Walpurgis revels evaporating with the coming of dawn.

The orchestrations are the lush arrangements of Rimsky, but the driving force and original strength of Mussorgsky is not dissipated. Ludwig's is essentially a bravura performance, its flaws being its black-white contrasts and at times incorrect pacing, as in the *Polonaise*.

The Rimsky ballet music is properly charming, exciting, and folk-flavored. Technically, the tonal sheen is dazzling.

—B. L.

**RIMSKY-KORSAKOFF:** *Le Coq d'Or* — Suite; *Capriccio Espagnol*; **French National Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Roger Desormiere**. Capitol LP disc P-8155, \$4.98.

▲FINE examples of Capitol's new *Full Dimensional Sound* technique and two scores which profit from its realistic and well balanced reproduction. Hearing Desormiere's performance of the suite from *Le Coq d'or*, I found myself wishing that he had been directing the full opera rather than the suite. For the noted French conductor achieves rare coloration and rhythmic fluency and makes the music enjoyable for its often amusing fantastic qualities. It may be regarded as intrepid to say that it is doubtful if Desormiere's performance of the overly familiar *Capriccio Espagnol* will be bettered on records, but that's the feeling I have on first hearing. Some listeners are going to have a field day demonstrating extended range

equipment with its realistic reproduction of percussion instruments.

—J. N.

**SHOSTAKOVICH:** *Symphony No. 7, Op. 60 (Leningrad)*; **Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Sergiu Celibidache**. Urania 601, 2-12, \$5.95.

▲THE NEW LP version by Celibidache is superior to the 78 rpm Musicraft records done under Steinberg's direction. (The dubbing of the latter on LP has not arrived for review). Celibidache is a conductor who keeps a firm rein both on the orchestra and on his own emotions. While Steinberg presents some sections more poetically, Celibidache offers a more taut and dramatic reading with better definition of detail. He is helped by a more modern and realistic recording. The music was written at white heat during the first months of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, and it was presented by almost every major orchestra in this country in 1942. It is characterized by great strength and some weakness. The latter occurs mainly in the slow movement, which is an over-extended orchestral recitative, and in the last movement where the composer tried to describe the victory that was still four years away. The first movement still grips the listener with its mechanistic *blitzkrieg* contrasted to the mighty upsurge of human strength and determination that rose to defy it, and its closing pages, when the opening melodies, transformed by their ordeal of fire, return, are among the most touching in modern music. The *March*, an intended *tour de force*, is too repetitious for its own good. The scherzo has a nostalgic "old Russian" flavor. Reproduction is powerfully resonant.

—B.L.

**SIBELIUS:** *Pelléas et Mélisande, Op. 46; Karelia Suite, Op. 11*; **Radio Berlin Symphony Orchestra, Jussi Blomstedt** (conductor); Urania LP, URLP 7038, \$5.95.

▲SIBELIUS' conception of Maeterlinck's celebrated lovers is essentially detached. It does not contain the breathless pathos of Fauré's lovely score for the play nor the tragic intensity of Debussy's recreation into the opera; neither is it Tristanian as



in the Schonberg version. It is cool, sympathetic and polite. As with all Sibelius incidental music, the score serves merely to enhance the play, never to interpret it. Hence for listening purposes, the result is rather fragmentary and seems to be talking about something out of the *Kalevala* rather than the living tragedy of the medieval lovers. The performance is not so persuasive as was Beecham's but, unlike it, is complete. The recording is lifelike and favors the numerous solo instruments.

Karelia, now a section of Soviet Russia, has a long and colorful history. In 1893 the youthful Sibelius composed a series of eight pieces for an historical tableau gotten up by the students of the Viborg University. This recording contains the three best-known: the *Intermezzo*, *Ballade* and *Alla marcia*. They sound very much like Tchaikovsky in a national mood, which means they are both sturdy and exciting. Again the early Beecham recording offers rough competition but Blomstedt manages to stir up quite a bit of enthusiasm, particularly in the march. The recording is again spacious and well-balanced.

—D. R.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *The Months* (arr. Gould); **Morton Gould**, pianist, conducting his Orchestra. Columbia LP disc, ML 4487, \$5.45.

▲MOST listeners are familiar with at least several of the twelve sections of Tchaikovsky's pleasant piano suite devoted to the months of the year. June's *Barcarolle* and November's *Troika* have achieved a separate popularity. They usually turn up at luncheon concerts and leave one wondering about their source. Mr. Gould — supplying orchestral accompaniments — has gone to considerable labor in restoring these charming miniatures to their rightful dignity. Playing the piano part relatively straight, he has skillfully interpolated material and juxtaposed sections to the extent of virtually writing new works. Yet — the greatest compliment possible — it sounds exactly like Tchaikovsky at his most charming. The performance is very good,

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containing as it does the suggestion of a devotion. The recording is excellent.

—D. R.

## Concerto

**BACH:** *Concertos No. 1 in D minor, No. 5 in F minor*; **Lukas Foss** (piano) with the **Zimmler String Sinfonietta**; Decca LP disc DL 9601, \$5.85.

▲THESE two concertos are probably the finest of the solo clavier group. For sheer musical interest they are unsurpassed; for pianistic technique their influence is felt even today. They were written for harpsichord, probably as elaborations of violin concertos, and there is some argument for hearing them played with the original keyboard instrument. Frank Pelleg's harpsichord recording of the first revealed a linear beauty which the piano through its nature sometimes obscures. This does not mitigate their beauty on the piano, particularly when they are in the hands of Mr. Foss. His are entirely intimate performances of the works, as though they were performed in a living room rather than a concert-hall. Several years ago Edwin Fischer made recordings of these works and his interpretations have been generally regarded as the finest on discs. Mr. Foss' readings are just as beautifully realized, the only element missing being the rather studied scholasticism apparent in Fischer's work. The Zimmler Sinfonietta, one of the best in the country, has rarely sounded better. The ensemble is extraordinary, often sounding like a quintet rather than a group of eighteen players. They have been faithfully and lovingly recorded.

—D. R.

**HAYDN:** *Cello Concerto in D major, Op. 101*; **BOCCHERINI:** *Cello Concerto in B flat*; **Antonio Janigro** and the **Vienna State Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Felix Prohaska**. Westminster LP disc WL-5126, \$5.95.

▲FOR the past twenty years the Haydn cello concerto has been accredited to Anton Kraft, a pupil of Haydn. Recently a member of the Haydn Society staff in Vienna discovered proof that the work

was actually written by Haydn. The popularity of this opus has long sustained the admiration of music listeners for the noted composer, and it is good to know that that admiration need not be shifted to a forgotten, minor musician.

Mr. Janigro's cello playing is unusually exciting for its penetrating musical absorption and its consistently lyrical beauty of tonal quality. His playing has great facility — he can summon breadth of tone and conjure a delicacy that makes his cello sound as though it were a violin. While not as broadly fervent as Casals in the Boccherini, or the late Emmanuel Feuermann in the Haydn, Janigro is equally persuasive and satisfying. The skill with which Janigro blends the coloration of the four strings is remarkable, his technical smoothness and assurance a consistent joy. Mr. Prohaska is a cooperative partner at the orchestral helm, and the Westminster engineering is excellent.

—P.H.R.

**MACDOWELL:** *Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor*; Alexander Jenner and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Henry Swoboda; **Woodland Sketches**; Artur Balsam (piano); Concert Hall LP disc CHS-1137, \$5.95.

▲WHEN Victor's recording of this concerto by Sanroma, Fiedler and the Boston Pops was issued fifteen years ago, some of us were inclined to mark the release as an important contribution to recorded American music. In its way, it is still an important contribution, though the work is dated today. Yet, it is representative of its time and the inescapable influences of European sources which prevailed in those native composers of ours who studied in Europe in the latter part of the 19th century. MacDowell studied at the Paris Conservatory and later in Germany. Influences of his latter schooling prevail in his music, notably in this concerto. Essentially a romanticist, MacDowell believed in poetical implications and accordingly gave titles to a lot of his music which aptly described its evocative intentions. The seven *Woodland Sketches*, played so nicely by Mr. Balsam, are charming miniatures of their kind. There have been those who found a strong influence of Grieg in

this concerto, but while there is a comparable poetic tenderness in MacDowell's music there is also a characteristic forcefulness which Grieg did not possess. This new performance stresses the romantic qualities of the work. Jenner's playing does not equal the forceful impact of Sanroma nor does Swoboda's match the alertness and strength of Fiedler. This performance, nevertheless, can be recommended for its honest musical absorption, which bears the hallmark of romantic tradition.

—P.H.R.

**MOZART:** *Piano Concerto No. 16 in D major, K. 451*; Jeannette Haien (piano) with the National Gallery Orchestra, Richard Bales (conductor) WCFM 10" LP disc, WCFM-101, \$4.75.

▲THE EARLIER Mozart piano concertos are constant delights. Their charm lies not in a tragic profundity, as in *K. 466*, nor in a perfect expression of serenity, as in *K. 595*, but rather in the lively candidness of their utterances and the utterly enchanting logicity of their procedure. This concerto, though not so pretty as the 17th nor so jolly as the 19th, has definite charms of its own including a final allegro of exquisitely delicate high-spirits. The concerto demands a deftness and a lightness of touch rare even in the early ones and for this reason I prefer the almost intuitive performance of Balsam and Desarzens (CHS-1405). Miss Haien, a very young and quite talented pianist, is inclined to rush through things. She also bangs upon occasion. Richard Bales, despite the best intentions in the world, still conducts like a Sunday-school teacher. The recording is not particularly spacious — sounds as though it might be coming over the radio.

—D.R.

**TARTINI:** *Violin Concerto in D minor* Peter Rybar (violin) with the Winterthur Symphony Orchestra conducted by Clemens Dahinden *Sonatas in E minor and E major*; Mr. Rybar with Franz Holletschek (harpsichord); Westminster LP disc WL 5118, \$5.95.

▲TARTINI was more than a member of the degenerating baroque, he was one of those who helped it degenerate. When the

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**TWO GRAND . . .** *Lover, That Old Black Magic, The Song Is You, They Didn't Believe Me, In The Still Of The Night, Brazil, The Continental, Falling In Love With Love*. **Arthur Whittimore** and **Jack Lowe**, duo pianists. RCA Victor Orchestra, **Victor Alessandro**, conductor. WDM 1648, \$5.14. LM 154, \$4.67



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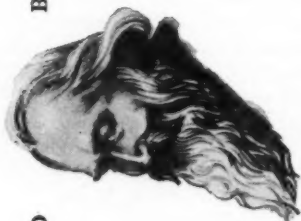


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concerto grosso of Corelli's time began to disintegrate it was Tartini, among others, who assisted at the birth of the modern concerto. The work here recorded is a particularly beautiful one containing, as it does, a *grave* of serene though unsmiling beauty and a joyous, almost festive, *presto*, reminiscent of some future Venetian *fête champêtre*. Quite aside from its obvious musicological interest the work stands perfectly well on its own ample musical grounds. Peter Rybar plays with a fluid elegance which suits the music to perfection. Likewise, the Winterthur, almost respectful under Clemens Dahinden, acquiesces itself suavely and with real style.

The sonatas are more of the period but that makes them none the less attractive. While not so exciting as the composer's famed "*Devil's Trill*" Sonata they make very enjoyable listening, particularly when heard with the harpsicord as ably managed as it is by Mr. Holletschek. All the works on this disc are up to Westminster's high standard of excellence. —D. R.

## Chamber Music

**BEETHOVEN:** *Sonatas No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 12; No. 4 in A minor, Op. 23; Zino Francescatti (violin) and Robert Casadesus (piano); Columbia LP disc, ML 4478, \$5.45.*

▲OF THE THREE Opus 12 sonatas, the third in E-flat is the most interesting and has long needed an LP performance. Its pensive *adagio* and fiercely happy *rondo* are unique in early Beethoven in that they contain more than merely pleasant listening. The fourth sonata brings us right into Beethoven's back-yard. The sublimities of the "Spring" sonata, composed next, are missing but the presages are there.

Francescatti and Casadesus are in their own right truly distinguished artists. In conjunction they are perfection in almost anything they undertake. There may be some argument that Beethoven should not be rendered in so completely lyrical a manner but this is a matter of opinion. These sonatas definitely gain by underplaying the imbedded rhetoric and by em-

phasizing the song-like elements in them. The recording is very faithful and for once the two instruments are in perfect balance.

—D.R.

**BRAHMS:** *Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 34; Chigi Quintet. London LP disc LL-501, \$5.95.*

▲TO DATE, some six recordings of this masterwork — one of Brahms' "most easily assimilated scores" — have materialized (three on LP), which is quite a record for a piece like this. The best previous LP version was by Curzon and the Budapest Quartet (Columbia ML-4336), though I personally admire Clara Haskil's fine piano playing in the concert Hall version (CHC-46) which is less realistically reproduced. The most fluent performance of this music would seem to be the Chigi's where a most perfect balance in ensemble is attained in London's fine recording. But the pianist here is not quite up to Curzon or Haskil and stylistic attributes are not as keen as those set forth by the Budapest group. Yet one cannot fail to admire the singing tone of the Chigi ensemble which prevails throughout, though a Brahms' performance does not seem wholly right to me without some rough spots — a sort of assertion of the composer's manly muscularity. —P.H.R.

**HAYDN:** *Quartet in G, Op. 77, No. 1; Quartet in F, Op. 77, No. 2; Heifetz String Quartet. E.M.S. LP disc 301, \$5.95.*

**HAYDN:** *Quartet in E, Op. 17, No. 1; Quartet in C minor, Op. 17, No. 4 (Haydn Society LP disc HSQ-13); Quartet in F, Op. 17, No. 2; Quartet in E flat, Op. 17, No. 3 (Haydn Society HSQ-14); Quartet in G, Op. 17, No. 5; Quartet in D, Op. 17, No. 6 (Haydn Society HSQ-15); Quartet in D minor, Op. 42; Quartet in G, Op. 77, No. 1 (Haydn Society HSQ-37); Quartet in F, Op. 77, No. 2; Quartet in B flat, Op. 103 (Haydn Society HSQ-38) (each disc \$5.95); all played by Schneider Quartet (Alexander Schneider and Isidore Cohen — violins; Karen Tuttle — viola; Madeline Foley — cello).*

▲BOTH of these ensembles are relatively new ones. The first owes its name to its capable cellist, Benar Heifetz, and the se-

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cond to its first violinist who formerly played second violin in the Budapest String Quartet. Mr. Schneider, I am told assembled his foursome with the express purpose of performing all of Haydn's string quartets for the Haydn Society. Last fall, the Schneider Quartet played a series of Haydn concerts in New York at which time it was apparent that the players did not see eye to eye in matters of style and uniformity of purpose. The first violin of Mr. Schneider dominated the ensemble and the interpretations of the works, I heard, were far from satisfactory.

From the evidence of the records, this group has worked out a better ensemble and achieved more stylistic unity. The performances of the above works are musically competent and generally forthright though lacking in unanimity of coloration and nuance of line. The choice of tempi does not always seem motivated by that inner freedom which makes for a truly inspired performance of Haydn's music — one that is rightfully free in spirit and supple in line. The fact that the playing has correct note values and generally equitable variations of dynamics lends value to these recorded contributions, many of which have not been available on records. One recalls the work of the original Pro Arte group, which made the recordings for the H.M.V. Haydn Society. The playing was very similar with the difference that the Pro Arte foursome was a more homogeneous unit. The playing of the Heifetz Quartet offers a striking contrast to the Schneider ensemble. There is far more rhythmic freedom in the former's treatment of those masterpieces in style and beauty of *Opus 77*, which were the last complete works that Haydn wrote. *Op. 103* comprises only two isolated middle movements of far lesser stature. On the evidence of the performance of the Heifetz group, one could wish that these players would record more Haydn quartets, possibly all 83. But barring this wish-for event the listener can derive some satisfaction in the issues of the Schneider Quartet, which is assuredly a worthy undertaking providing excellent reproduction.

May, 1952

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**HAYDN:** *Quartet in E flat, Op. 64, No. 6*,  
**BOCCHERINI:** *Quartet in D, Op. 6, No. 1; New Italian Quartet* (Paolo Borciani, Elisa Pegreffi — violins; Piero Farulli — viola; Franco Rossi — cello).  
 London LP disc LLP-320, \$5.95.

▲HAYDN'S *Opus 64* is representative of his mature mastery, and the workmanship in each of the six quartets is as imposing as his imaginative handling of the thematic material. No. 6, which has been called the "topmost summit among its fellows," seems to have been unduly disregarded on records — though Nos. 1 and 2 are the really neglected ones. Until the Konzerthaus String Quartet recently gave us its performance of No. 6, the only representation was by the Pro Arte group in the Haydn Society collection. Of the existent performances, this one by the highly talented New Italian Quartet achieves the most fluent rhythm while retaining precision. The quartet has a Minuet-Scherzo which is one of Haydn's best dance pieces, and its last movement is an artful example of Haydn's ingenuity in handling the rondo form.

Boccherini's *Op. 6 No. 1* is not just another Boccherini quartet, but a work of great beauty and considerable resourcefulness. It seems to be a favorite of Italian players, for three different Latin ensembles have recorded it to date. Columbia, back in 1938, issued a perform-

ance by the Poltronieri Quartet which was far from inspired. The present ensemble does greater justice to this music, making us more conscious of its sterling worth. Undeniably, the heart of this work is the beautiful *Adagio* in which the use of octaves recalls the last *D major Quartet* of Mozart. This is followed by a particularly ingratiating Rondo-Minuet, the final movement. London's recording, while most realistic and tonally gracious, is frequently disturbed by bass hum.

—P.H.R.

**MOZART:** *Quintet in A major, K. 581; Reginald Kell* (clarinet) and **Fine Arts Quartet**. Decca LP disc DL-9600, \$5.95.

▲DISCUSSING the Wlach-Konzerthaus Quartet and Goodman-American Art Quartet versions of this work last month, I remarked on the difference in approach by the two groups. The tempi of the former was more leisurely than the latter, and in my estimation Wlach's richer tone served Mozart's music better than Goodman's somewhat streamlined elative quality. Of the three clarinetists, Kell is the greatest artist, especially in nuance and consistent beauty of tone. It is unfortunate that Kell does not have with him a string ensemble having comparable tonal qualities. While a competent group, the Fine Arts Quartet is rather thin-toned and lacking in depth of perspective. Of the three quartets, the Konzerthaus penetrates the music the deepest, and for all of Kell's beauty of tone this group and Wlach give the most satisfying performance of the wonderful finale. To split hairs, Kell and the Fine Arts adopt a tempo between the tempos of others in the minuet, which serves advantageously both the minuet proper and the Trio sections — more especially the second one where the clarinet has the important part. Choice of these three versions of this cherishable work may be governed by personal admiration for the clarinetist, but I would certainly recommend careful listening to the Westminster recording which exploits a Mozart performance played with true affection and esteem. Two earlier LP versions of this

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P.H.R

**MOZART:** *Piano and Violin Sonatas* — in *G*, K.379; in *B flat*, K.454; **Walter Barylli** (violin) and **Paul Badura-Skoda** (piano). Westminster LP disc WL-5109, \$5.95.

▲THESE two lovely sonatas reveal another facet of Mozart's craftsmanship — the creation of the beautifully balanced, evenly weighted works for piano and violin in which each instrument smoothly complements the other, never being allowed to dominate the musical picture. In *K.454*, Mozart, writing for a talented performer, entrusted the most flowing passages to the violin, but even here the two instruments share equal responsibility for unfolding the musical pattern.

The performance by Walter Barylli, concert master of the Vienna Philharmonic and the young Badura-Skoda, both tops in their own fields, is not as satisfying in combination as their individual talents warrant. Time was when before giving permanence to the performance of an important work, artists were given opportunity to study a work, live with it, and through their association forge a mature interpretation. Weingartner's recordings of Beethoven's symphonies, Brailowsky's or Rubinstein's playing of Chopin, or the perfect team work of Goldberg and Kraus in the Mozart Piano and Violin Sonatas are cases in point.

The present recording, however, leaves one with the impression that this is a very competent and intelligent reading but certainly not a rendition that the performers have lived with and thought about for very long. Mr. Badura-Skoda has done better elsewhere (Schubert's piano music and the Mozart concertos). There is no doubt that a continued musical relationship between Badura-Skoda and Barylli could bring forth excellent and definitive recordings of these works. Technically, the recording is fine.

—B.L.

**SCHUBERT:** *String Quartet in D Major*, *Op. posth.*; *String Quartet in B flat Major*, *Op. 168*; **Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet**. Westminster LP disc WL-5110, \$5.95.

▲THIS DISC features two string quartets of Schubert written before the composer was eighteen. The one in *B flat*, *Op. 168* is a minor masterpiece, bearing prophetic overtones of mature Schubertian lyricism and texture in its broad, singing *Andante* and gaily tripping *Menuetto*. The quartet in *D major*, *Op. posth.* emerges as a slighter work in spite of the youthful composer's ambitious attempts to make it sound deep. The music of both is derivative and pleasant but not arresting. They are youthful works remarkable in the same way as Mozart's or Mendelssohn's early efforts are.

The recording is well balanced and shows careful understanding on the part of the performers. Technically, the disc is very good.

—B.L.

**SCHUBERT:** *Trio in E flat*, *Op. 100*; **Paul Badura-Skoda** (piano), **Jean Fournier** (violin), **Antonio Janigro** (cello). Westminster LP disc WL-5121, \$5.95.

▲THIS enchanting work of Schubert's has been shamefully neglected in favor of his *B flat Trio*, *Op. 99*. The one performance issued in this country in 1937, by the Serkin-Buschi Trio did not remain too long in the Victor catalogue, though musically it was on quite as high a level as the old Thibaud-Cortot-Casals version of the *B flat*. Serkin's playing was superb throughout, and this is a trio in which the pianist shines. Schubert wrote both the *B flat* and *E flat* about a year before his death. They are almost perfect foils — the first a work of elative breadth, the second "a thing of grace, intimate and virginal," as Schumann said. In the *E flat*, we have the lyrical song and beauty for which Schubert had such unparalleled feeling. While the opening movement begins with great confidence it does not exploit itself in the manner of its predecessor but becomes predominately restrained in its concern with the second lyrical theme. The piano writing is most effective and full of surprises which cannot fail to delight the

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listener. One of Schubert's loveliest themes graces the slow movement, and elfin rhythms prevail in the scherzo with its adventuresome canonic workmanship.

This performance is so completely satisfying that one hardly knows where to begin in one's praise. The balance is perfect, the unanimity of purpose likewise. But what gives this performance a radiant spot in the Schubert library on records is the extraordinary rhythmic nuancing of the three players. Westminster has provided wonderfully live reproduction, clear and tonally gratifying from the most delicate pianissimo to the fullest forte.

P.H.R.

## Keyboard

**BACH:** *Six Clavier Partitas*; **Paul Badura-Skoda** (piano). Westminster set WAL-303, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲THE PEDANTIC notion that Bach's keyboard music is best served by the harpsichord is completely repudiated in these thoughtful and smooth-flowing performances of his six *Partitas*. Each one is given a single disc and the pianist observes all repeats. There is a lesson in classic restraint in these performances, in clarity of line and rhythmic vitality. One could write at considerable length on this music which some writers do not rate as highly as the *French* and *English Suites* but nevertheless have variety and fascination for many a serious pianist. Where the harpsichord often sounds brittle and clanky, the modern piano in the hands of an artist who values mellow tonal qualities seems wholly equitable. Badura-Skoda recalls for me the playing of the late Harold Samuel and Katherine Heyman, both of whom performed several of these works on the writer's own piano. Westminster's piano recording is tonally realistic without being metallic.

—P.H.R.

**BACH:** *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor*, *Concerto in D minor after Vivaldi*, *Fugues in C and G minor*, *Passacaglia and*

*Fugue in C minor*; **E. Power Biggs** (organ). Columbia LP disc ML-4500, \$5.45.

▲A HANDFUL of Bach's greatest organ works are represented on this disc which is entitled *Bach's Royal Instrument* — Vol. 3. As before in this series, E. Power Biggs is heard performing on the organ in Symphony Hall, Boston. Also as before none of the performances are especially memorable. Biggs time and again loses tension in keeping the big line by some rhythmic flaccidity, slight pauses that break up the pieces into episodes, and a general lack of abandon. It is a pity that these faults persist in his work, for Biggs certainly has all the rest of the equipment needed to perform these wondrous selections to a king's taste. Columbia has provided expert engineering, too.

— C.J.L.

**DEBUSSY:** *Twelve Etudes*; **Monique Haas** (piano). Decca LP disc DL9599, \$5.85.

▲HERE is a good performance of Debussy's recalcitrant but rewarding *Etudes* by the French pianist Monique Haas. But it is not on quite the imaginative or sonic level of Charles Rosen's recent effort on an R.E.B. LP disc. While Haas keeps each *étude* moving in time and in rhythm, she misses the finer nuances of color and dynamics that give so much contrast to Rosen's work. Decca's recording is satisfactory without matching the super-high R.E.B. standard.

— C.J.L.

**RAMEAU:** *Suites in A and E minor*; **Fernando Valenti** (harpsichord). Westminster LP disc WL-5128, \$5.95.

▲ONE of the most exciting keyboard musicians working today is Fernando Valenti. His recent recitals and phonograph records have been unfailingly stimulating to the mind and the ear. Valenti is a master musician and a master artist.

No other living harpsichordist could surpass Valenti today in his treatment of Rameau's noble and jolly suites full of the sounds of outdoors and the accents of dance. The record indeed would be worth owning if only for his performance of the great *Gavotte and Variations* which conclude the *Suite in A minor*. However,

Valenti is not quite up to duplicating the qualities Wanda Landowska gave us in her version of the *Suite in E minor* some fifteen years ago. There is a certain delicacy and a thoroughly disinterested passion that seems closer to the spirit of the work than Valenti's robust and hearty way can communicate. The finer textured sound of Landowska's old Pleyel instrument may have something to do with this effect, but it is not all.

Westminster's recording is what we have come to expect. It is completely praiseworthy. —D.R.

**SCARLATTI:** *Sonatas for Harpsichord, Vol. II; Fernando Valenti* (harpsichord). Westminster LP disc, WL 5116, \$5.95.

▲ONE RUNS out of superlatives in attempting to describe Valenti's recorded performances of Scarlatti sonatas of which this is the second and, unfortunately, final volume. Suffice it to say that it is rare indeed when esthetic insight into a work is coupled in a single man with a technique so prodigious that he is able to communicate his extraordinary vision. Again the separate sonatas are chosen from both the famous and the little-known: Longo Nos. 8, 14, 23, 104, 126, 127, 232, 262, 413, 422, 465 and 486. Again they are juxtaposed on the disc in such a manner that the complex later sonatas are pleasingly contrasted with those both earlier and simpler. My particular favorites on this disc are No. 431, the famous so-called "Pastorale" which Valenti performs with consummate delicacy, and the little-known Nos. 126 and 127, a perfect pairing of an intense cantabile and a flamboyantly Spanish baroque invention.

The recording is, again, perfect. If any object that the instrument seems "too realistic" rest assured that, were you in the room with it, this is just the way it would sound. —D.R.

**A TREASURY OF HARPSICHORD MUSIC:** *Selections by Bach, Scarlatti, Chambonnieres, Rameau, Couperin, Purcell, Handel, Mozart, and Vivaldi; Wanda Landowska* (harpsichord).

RCA Victor LP disc LM-1217, \$5.72.

▲THIS is a typical Landowska recital, containing some of the Polish keyboard artist's favorites. Landowska's playing here is very much like what it has been for about the past five years. There is an increasing tendency toward gigantic distensions in phraseology and an espousal of certain expansions and contractions of tempo, all of which tend to erase some of the remarkable spontaneity and abandon once so manifest in her playing. This is not to say that her playing is incapable of giving a great deal of pleasure. Her precise articulation of ornaments and her enormous gift of rhythm (when she plays straightforwardly) are still a source of delight. By all means hear her performances of Rameau's *La Dauphine*, Mozart's *Turkish March*, and *The Nightingale* (by an anonymous author) as examples of these powers being used most impressively. —C.J.L.

## Voice

**BACH:** *Cantata No. 106 (Actus Tragicus)* and *Cantata No. 84 (Ich bin vergnugt)*; Westminster LP disc WL-5125, \$5.95. *Cantata No. 198 (Trauer-Ode)*; Westminster LP disc WL-5123, \$5.95. All performed by Magda Laszlo (soprano), Hilde Rossel-Majden (contralto), Alfred Poell (bass), Waldemar Kmentt (tenor), with Akademiechor and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera conducted by Hermann Scherchen.

▲THESE two discs are easily the best your reviewer has heard this month. First, there is the magnificent and little known *Trauer-Ode Cantata* (written for use in a memorial service for the death of Queen Christiane Eberhardine of Poland and Saxony) of enormously varied and communicative expression. Full of dramatic contrasts, touching instrumental devices, and an assortment of melodies as apt as any Bach ever conceived for words, this work cannot fail to leave a lasting impression of its noble and wondrous beauties.



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Secondly, the exceedingly rich and imaginative *Actus Tragicus Cantata* with its wonderful sinfonia and its message of God's time is the best clothed in lovely vocal and instrumental sounds of flutes, violas da gamba, and harpsichord. Of less importance, but still good to hear, is the *Cantata No. 84* which was apparently composed as a household cantata for Bach's wife.

The executant stars on this occasion are three. Hermann Scherchen's clean, sweet, steady way with Bach's vocal music is once again in evidence. The singing of Hilde Rossel-Majdan is an occasion for rejoicing, for this voice is ever so warm of sound and ever so sure in handling the long, flowing lines of the airs. And last but hardly least are Westminster's engineers who have caught the spirit of a small group performing with devotion and care in the intimate surroundings of the average Lutheran church in a way that is unmatched in my experience of listening to records.

For lovers of Bach and religious music in general, here are two discs that should not be missed on any account.—C.J.L.  
**BACH:** *Cantata No. 140-Wachet auf; Cantata No. 32 - Liebster Jesu, mein Verlangen;* Magda Laszlo (soprano), Alfred Poell (bass), Waldemar Kmentt (tenor), with Akademiechor & Orchestra of Vienna State Opera conducted by Hermann Scherchen. Westminster LP disc WL-5122, \$5.95.

**BACH:** *Cantata No. 140 - Wachet auf; Cantata No. 4 - Christ lag in Todesbanden;* Anny Felbermeyer (soprano), Alfred Uhl (tenor), Hans Braun (baritone), Choir & Orchestra of Bach Guild conducted by Felix Prohaska. Bach Guild LP disc BG-511, \$5.95

▲ON THESE records appear three of the wonderfully constructed, richly contrapuntal, and emotionally penetrating cantatas which Bach built on the basis of the Lutheran hymn and embellished with the baroque devices of *da capo* arias, obligato instrumental solos, multiple choruses, and operatic recitatives. Each sets forth a text and is illumined with a dominant feeling. But no matter what sadness or

doubt precedes, the close is always on an affirmative note; ultimate happiness is assured in the life hereafter through Jesus' suffering. Thus, *Wachet auf* rises to a rapturous conclusion as the Soul becomes one with Christ and the promise of salvation is held forth to all; *Liebster Jesu* proceeds from a troubled start to a vision of the serene heaven open to him who forswears earth's vanities, and the Easter cantata, *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, after briefly touching on the agony of the passion, bursts into alleluiah's because death has forever been robbed of its sting thereby.

Of the three cantatas, *No. 4* has the most archaic flavor, consisting of seven variations on the choral melody set forth by the sinfonia; *No. 32* uses solo voices, except for the closing chorale which gives it its name; and *No. 140* beginning straightaway with the chorus singing the chorale, returns to it after the duet between soprano and bass, and closes with the same dramatic theme.

Although these are both noteworthy releases, the Bach Guild performance of *No. 140* seems to me to have the edge over Westminster in that it is better balanced and possesses in Prohaska a conductor with a more discriminating sense for correct pacing. Scherchen's *Wachet auf* drags by comparison and loses force and unity. Also, on the Bach Guild record, Anny Felbermeyer's pure tones are more pleasing than the richer voice of Magda Laszlo, which seems a little uncomfortable in the highest register; choral textures are smoother and more flowing. Between the male soloists personal preference will dictate choice. To me, Braun seems more aloof dramatically but warmer in tone than Poell. Both of the Bach Guild performances please me more than the previously issued ones by the Robert Shaw Chorale. Technically, both recordings are excellent - noise-free and clear.

—B.L.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Christus am Oelberg (Christ on the Mount of Olives), Op. 85;* Margit Opawsky (soprano), Radko Delorco (tenor), Walter Berry (bass), with Vienna Kammerchor & Orchestra of Vienna State Opera conducted by

**Henry Swoboda.** Concert Hall LP disc CHS-1135, \$5.95.

▲**CONCEIVED** in 1800, at the time the *Eroica* was taking shape, the *Christus am Oelberg* contains dramatic structural elements similar to those in the *Eroica* as well as vocal elements in Beethoven's opera. The haste in which it was written may be noticed in certain passages, which while excusable in some composers are for Beethoven musical clichés.

This is no passionless work of adoration. It mirrors dramatically the agony of Christ resigning himself to a sacrificial death to save mankind. The protagonist is conceived as a great suffering man, fearful at first of his dread fate, asking pity for his human fears. Then as his mission is outlined to him by a Seraph and angel's voices, strength and resolution come out of his love for mankind, and he welcomes death which we hear approaching in the menacing voices of soldiers. To the disciples and to Peter, he counsels love of fellow-men and not revenge, while the Seraph proclaims him divine for this message of good will.

It is a man that is here glorified rather than a god. There is pathos at first, then frightening intensity and concentrated passion leading to the moment of willing self-dedication. The work seethes with the agony and conflict out of which comes final peace, not only in the vocal sections but in the symphonic support given by the orchestra. Once again, we have a Beethoven portrait of a titanic figure, breaking his bonds, lashing out at injustice, and raising himself and all mankind with him to a new level.

Delorco as the Christ is moving, always dramatically convincing while Margit Opawsky's rich bell tones, strong and sure, are reassuring and right in the part of the Seraph. She acquires herself thrillingly in some typically trying Beethoven vocal passages. Swoboda lends sure but unobtrusive support. A nicely balanced and tonally satisfying record. —B.L.

**BORODIN:** *Prince Igor* — *Aria of Igor* (Act II); **RUBINSTEIN:** *The Demon* — *Do not weep, my child* (Act II) (both sung in Russian); **MASSNET:** *Don*

*Quichotte* — *Mort de Don Quichotte*; (with Rosalind Nadell); **PALADILHE:** *Patricie* — *Pauvre martyr obscur*; **George London** (bass-baritone) with **Metropolitan Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Jean Morel** and **Kurt Adler**. Columbia LP disc ML-4489, \$5.45.

▲**MR. LONDON** is featured on this disc in Dramatic Scenes from "Russian and French Opera." The gifted bass-baritone, who sings both in Russian and in French in these offerings, presents just reasons for a revival of Borodin's *Prince Igor* and Massenet's *Don Quichotte*. It is too bad that Columbia provides no translations of these several scenes, for few will know the languages, which circumvents appreciation of the arias. This is particularly true of the lengthy and somewhat repetitious Prince Igor one, in which he remembers his wife and former station and laments his imprisonment by the Khan Kontchak. The explanations of the arias on the envelope hardly suffice and in the case of the Death Scene of *Don Quichotte* few will be able to distinguish when the singer is doubling for Sancho. Considering that several of the record companies are now supplying inserts with translations, one wishes this would become a universal habit.

George London is a singularly gifted singer. His voice is rich and most expressive in tonal quality, yet he does not always make us believe in the emotions with which he is concerned. He is a splendid musician, as his *Don Quichotte* scene shows when compared with Chaliapin's. The latter was a more theatrical artist, who took endless liberties to serve his interpretative purposes. Massenet's *Don Quichotte*, particularly in this final scene, has

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unusual human interest and a pathos that this composer did not always achieve with such idealism. The wonderfully realistic recording in which the balance between voice and orchestra has been ideally handled makes this disc an enjoyable one of its kind.

—P.H.R.

# MARIA CEBOTARI MEMORIAL

**RECORD:** *Salome* — *Final Scene* (Strauss); *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* — *Martern aller Arten* (Mozart); *Die Hochzeit des Figaro* — *Recitative and Rosenarie* (Mozart); *Madama Butterfly* — *Love Duel* (Puccini) (all sung in German); **Maria Cebotari** (soprano) with **Walter Ludwig** (tenor) (in the duet), **Symphony Orchestra of Radio Berlin** conducted by **Arthur Rother**. Urania LP disc 7036, \$5.95.

▲CEBOTARI'S death in 1949 at the age of 39 was indeed a lamentable tragedy. It is owing to her two sons that Urania has been able to issue its recordings of her vocal artistry, taken from radio broadcasts made a few years before her death. In these selections, Cebotari's art is heard at its best and her exceptional gifts in different aspects of music is impressively exploited. The soprano's singing of the highly difficult final scene from *Salome* reveals her ability to retain consistent beauty of tone in music that taxes constantly a singer's vocal resources. No one has quite achieved such consistently sensuous beauty of sound in this scene which tends to make the final pages the more horrifying. It is too bad that Herod's voice was not included, for the alteration in the finale proves somewhat anti-climactic.

It is as much Cebotari's fine musicianship as her vocal gifts that make each of these operatic scenes completely enjoyable. Her Mozart arias rank with the best on records, and one wishes that she had lived to sing both roles at our own Metropolitan. Considering her post-war triumphs in London, it is almost certain that she would have been brought to this country had she lived longer. Perhaps the greatest surprise is her *Butterfly* performance, where she is joined by the expressive tenor — Walter Ludwig. Though

the sumptuous orchestral accompaniment here often blankets the voices, one realizes her complete absorption with the role. Too, the German language does not offend as Cebotari knew her Italian text and must have sung with it in mind. It is to be hoped that more recordings of her exceptional artistry will be forthcoming. The reproduction in this record, except for the *Butterfly*, is some of the best that Urania has acquired from Radio Berlin.

—P.H.R.

# A TREASURY OF EASTER SONGS:

*Christ the Lord is risen today* (Traditional, 1708); *Hilariter* (German, 1623); *This joyful Easter tide* (Dutch, 17th century); *Salem* (Early American); *Maria Magdalena* (Brahms); *Do-don't touch-a my garment* (Negro spiritual); *Easter anthem* (Billings); *Love is come again* (French); *Now April has come* (Welsh); *Ehre sei dir Christe* (Schütz); *Christ the Lord hath risen* (12th century); *The world itself keeps Easter* (Traditional); *Easter eggs* (Russian); *Tenebrae factae sunt* (Poulenc); *'Tis finished* (American, 1815); *On Easter morn at break of day* (Scotch); *That virgin's child* (Tallis); *O sons and daughters* (French, 15th century); *Calvary* (Negro spiritual); *The Passion of Our Lord according to St. John* — *Ah Lord, Thy dear sweet angels send* (Bach). **The Robert Shaw Chorale** conducted by **Robert Shaw**. Victor LP disc LM 1201, \$5.45.

▲MR. SHAW has done for Easter what is so customary for Christmas in assembling this miscellaneous collection. Aside from the more or less familiar hymns the program includes several valuable repertoire pieces not available elsewhere — the Poulenc, the Billings and the Tallis. The beautiful Schütz selection is the final chorus from the *St. Matthew Passion*, a recording of which has recently been released by Renaissance. The performances are in the well-known clean-cut Shaw style, the recording generally good but occasionally overloaded.

—P.L.M.

**HANDEL:** *Te Deum for the Peace of Utrecht*; *Let Thy Hand be Strengthened* (*Coronation anthem*); **Ruth Guldback**

(soprano), **Valborg Garde** (soprano), **Else Brems** (contralto), **Dagmar Schou** (contralto), **Ole Walbom** (tenor), **Volmer Holboll** (tenor), **Einar Norby** (basso) and **Soren Sorenson** (organ) and **Chamber Orchestra with Chorus** of the **Danish State Radio** conducted by **Mogens Woldike**. Haydn Society LP disc 2046, \$5.95.

▲IN THE HIGHLY informative notes written for this recording, by no less an authority than Karl Geiringer, we are told how this *Te Deum* was instrumental in establishing Handel as a naturalized Englishman. It is a story of international intrigue on the level of royalty. As its name implies, this setting of Saint Ambrose's hymn was offered in celebration of the Peace of Utrecht. The anthem which fills out the second side of the disc was composed for the coronation of George I.

The music of Handel is perhaps harder to describe than that of any other great master: suffice it to say these two pieces are characteristic of his style. Those who have come to know the *Deltingen Te Deum* (recently recorded on WCFM LP 6) will find this one tailored to a not dissimilar pattern. Its five sections are mostly composed for chorus, but the seven vocal soloists lend considerable variety to the ensemble. The briefer anthem is in three sections for five-part chorus.

The performance is an amazingly idiomatic one coming from Denmark, that land of musical surprises. For the most part the singers present the text in the clearest of English, only occasionally betrayed by a foreign accent. It hardly seems necessary to say of a performance conducted by Woldike that it is thoughtfully conceived and cleanly executed. The recording balance is unusually good.

—P.L.M.

**MAHLER:** *Early songs from Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (Scheiden und Meiden; Hant und Grethe; Ich ging mit Lust durch einen grünen Wald; Es sunen drei Engel; Frühlingsmorgen); *Last songs from Rückert* (Ich atmel' einen linden Duft; Blicke mir nicht in die Lieder; Um Mitternacht; Liebst du um Schönheit; Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen); *Anny Felbermayer* (soprano)

May, 1952

and **Alfred Poell** (baritone) with **Viena State Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Felix Prohaska**. Vanguard LP disc VRS 421, \$5.95.

▲EVEN in his most elaborate compositions Mahler's was essentially a vocal style. He liked to add voices to his symphonic scores, and his whole conception of melody had its inspiration in folksong. It is not surprising, then, that so many of his most appealing songs are set to words from the Arnim and Brentano folk anthology, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, or that the direct lyrical expression of the poet Rückert should call forth not only the cycle *Kindertotenlieder* but some other especially lovely independent songs. The "early" songs here presented are forerunners of the later and better known *Des Knaben Wunderhorn Lieder*; some of them will be remembered by a Columbia album of a few years back sung by Desi Halban with Bruno Walter at the piano (M 809). The idea of combining these fresh and charming songs into one cycle with the five Rückert settings from Mahler's swansong is not ineffective, though the reasons behind it are not so obvious. Presumably Mr. Poell's deserved success in Vanguard's recording of the other *Wunderhorn* songs accounts for his being intrusted with the later songs, though he is less happy in them. Such pieces as *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* and above all *Liebst du um Schönheit* call quite definitely for the contralto voice, and they take this admirable artist up beyond his best range. The star of the set, as it turns out, is Miss Felbermayer, a soprano of freshly lyrical voice, intelligence and style. As in the earlier *Wunderhorn* set Mr. Prohaska shows real affection for the music; the orchestral playing is, if anything, better this time.

—P.L.M.

**MAHLER:** *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*;

**WOLF:** *Auf einer Wanderung; Verschwiegene Liebe; Verschling der Abgrund; Um Mitternacht; Coptisches Lied No. 2; Elfenlied; Schlafendes Jesuskind; Auf dem grünen Balkon; Blanche Thebom* (mezzo-soprano) with Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult and with William Hughes at the piano. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1203, \$5.45.

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▲**MISS THEBOM'S** recital of Hugo Wolf's songs was reviewed by Philip L. Miller in August 1950 (45 rpm release). Essentially an operatic artist, Mr. Miller pointed out, "it is in the biggest *lieder* that she sounds best." While one agrees, it should be pointed out that the noted mezzo-soprano sings all with evident devotion, but hardly with enough variety in style to make the recital completely vital. Her singing of the Mahler *lieder* (previously done by Carol Brice and Metternich) is too well-bred for these folk-like songs and the orchestral accompaniments by Boult are tame in comparison with Reiner. While Miss Thebom's German is more convincing than Miss Brice's her interpretations are far less satisfying than her competitors. Recording in both cases is realistic.

—J. N.

**MUSSORGSKY: 14 Songs; Vladimir Rosing** (tenor) with **Myers Foggin** (piano). Decca LP disc DL-9577, \$5.95.

▲**VLADIMIR ROSING'S** vocal style borders on the declamatory and one cannot forget, listening to these wonderful songs, that he was once an operatic tenor. For he treats them all like miniature dramas. Yet, his artistry has its interest. These songs were originally issued in the 1930s by Parlophone as a "Mussorgsky Song Society" release and in their time were cordially greeted. The LP version will undoubtedly prove a success for little of the composer's original songs are available on records. It seems a pity that Victor never issued Maria Kurenko's album of Mussorgsky songs considering she is one of the best singers of Russian songs in our midst. Rosing's versions of the *Songs and Dances of Death* are definitely eclipsed by Jennie Tourel's presentations (Columbia ML-4289) where musicianship of a higher order prevails. Tourel should record more of the composer's songs.

The songs included on this record are, besides the four mentioned, *Yermoushka's Cradle Song*, *Gopak*, *The Star*, *To the Dnieper*, *The Orphan*, *Mushrooms*, *The Goat*, *Ballade*, and *Savishna*. Also there is the *Reverie of the Young Peasant* from the opera *The Fair of Sorotchinsk*. The transfer to LP has been exceptionally well handled.

As fine as Richard Holt's notes are, one wishes that translations rather than descriptions of the songs had been provided.

—J.N.

**OPERETTA MUSIC from Vienna: Hilde Gueden** (soprano) with the **Vienna State Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Wilhelm Loibner**. London 10" LP disc, LPS 477, \$4.95.

▲**MISS GEUDEN**, much admired for her Eva in London's *Meistersinger*, adapts herself well to a number of popular items which prove just about the antithesis of Wagner. They are songs from Millocker's *The Dubarry*; Kalman's *Countess Maritz*, and Franz Lehar's *The Land of Smiles*, *Giuditta*, *The Gypsy Princess* and *Paganini*. All these are done with the simple beauty and naive *eclat* which is so very appropriate for light-opera music. Her voice and the accompanying orchestra have been both well-balanced and well-recorded.

—D.R.

**PUCCINI: Tosca** (complete); **Adriana Guerrini** (Tosca), **Gianni Poggi** (Cavaradossi), **Paolo Silvieri** (Scarpia), and others, with **Orchestra and Chorus of Radio Italiana** conducted by **Francesco Molinari-Pradelli**. Cetra Soria LP set 1230, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲**THIS** performance proves to be a rather routine one, typical of Italian radio, despite the fact that the three main protagonists are well known and widely admired singers. Guerrini lacks essential fire for the vibrant Tosca — her singing is too much of one color. Poggi has a fine, natural voice of considerable size but he lacks control and maturity. Silvieri has the power and range for the role of Scarpia, yet he does not make the character's sinister actions fully believable. The orchestral direction seems rather tame, not up to Cetra's usual high standards. Recording is good but lacking in the realism of the theatre that one finds in the Westminster performance. Victor is re-issuing on LP its earlier performance of *Tosca*, featuring Maria Caniglia, Gigli and Borgioli, which — despite its famous names — does not rise above the level of the two more recent offerings. In all, the tenors fail to observe the *piano* markings indicated by the composer, and the sopranos



either fail to do justice to the romantic qualities of the heroine or exaggerate her impetuous and often flamboyant traits. Some may recall the Tosca of Carmen Melis in the older Victor set; she alone on records gave the most artistic performance of this character.

—J.N.

## Weingartner Release

(Continued from page 261)

phonies. If these Weingartner performances were not a memorial release, the issue of sentimentality would not have been raised.

Among famous conductors of his day, Weingartner was one of the earliest to consider seriously the value of recordings. He was not the first, however, for that honor actually belongs to Nikisch though his recordings are not truly representative of his artistry. It was Albert Coates who — back in the acoustic era immediately after World War I — became the first leading conductor to take the phonograph seriously and enlist the interest of others. I do not believe that Weingartner would have considered recording symphonic music had not the pioneering work of Coates been regarded as more than moderately successful for its time. Coates began his serious work with the phonograph in 1918; Weingartner's first records came five years later — two Beethoven symphonies. Thereafter, he did nothing until 1927 when he recorded the Beethoven *Sixth*. This was, of course, an electrical recording, as acoustic reproduction stopped in 1924-25. By this time, Coates had a wide repertoire of symphonies and symphonic works to his credit on electrically-cut discs.

Weingartner was a much older man than Coates and perhaps not so enthusiastic towards music in reproduction when he made his first Beethoven symphonies. He was born in 1863, while Coates was born in 1882. I have been reminded by a Viennese friend that Weingartner had fallen into disrepute in the early 1930's at Vienna, where he occupied a post as leading con-

ductor both at the Vienna State Opera and in the concert hall. Critics cited him during this period as "a tired, old man, who no longer played with the animation of former years" and condemned him for being "set in his ways, and deaf to all advice and criticism." Yet, Vienna had previously hailed him as one of the truly outstanding conductors of the world. It seems to me that Viennese critics were perhaps playing politics and being somewhat unjust to Weingartner, who emerged from Vienna in 1936 only to achieve new triumphs elsewhere. We can never know if such criticism was really just or not, for we have no recordings that would show us whether or not the conductor had in former days more virility and dramatic compulsion than in the days when he made his famous recordings of the Beethoven and Brahms symphonies. Yet, there is reason to believe he may have had, in view of Debussy's earlier praise of his conductorial abilities.

Among all the conductors, who have left us souvenirs of their artistry on records, it seems to me Weingartner with his consistency in thought and purpose and his ever fluent rhythms showed his worth as an interpreter. His readings of these thirteen symphonies are scholarly and always animated — few would deny that he adheres to the printed page very closely. This is not to say that his Beethoven and Brahms are everyman's idea of these composers, but one must admit that his thoughts on their symphonies are consistently arresting and certainly worth preserving. Conductors of the past made a study of his performances, and one can believe that others will continue to do so. After all, his book — *On the Performance of Beethoven's Symphonies* — has long been regarded as a standard in its field.

The LP recordings vary from acceptable to surprisingly good. The tonal qualities are often remarkably full, though the treble tends to shrillness on occasion and the bass lacks clarity and warmth. Tonal wavers are present and the pitch is sometimes a bit higher than it should be, but this was true of some of the 78s. Frequency response is naturally limited. Generally, the winds are better reproduced

than the strings, while the percussion loses in forcefulness. Yet, the overall results is better than many existent LPs. Changes in sound quality, where the patching in LPs were made, are noticeable, but none of these are seriously distracting.

### *The Beethoven Symphonies*

*Symphony No. 1*, (1938) is a genial, lyrical performance. Weingartner contrasts nicely the mysterious opening with the bubbling *allegro*. His finale has an appreciable boisterousness, but the unindicated repeat of a scale passage in the scherzo seems silly.

*Symphony No. 2* (1939) is noticeably a better recording — London engineers show up the Viennese. This is a smooth, fluent reading without any enlightening compunctions of drama.

*Symphony No. 3* (1937) has self-reliance without the dramatic fervor others find in this work. Yet, the heroic qualities of this music are not inappropriately exploited. The Viennese recording has an echo.

*Symphony No. 4* (1934) lacks dynamic strength in the reproduction, but the performance has a classical benevolence and warm-heartedness.

*Symphony No. 5* (1936) shows the London engineers were wide-awake in matters of balance for the time, though there is a lack of clarity in the opening movement. The conductor's consistency in respecting the printed page is well demonstrated in this work which does not incite him to any undue dramatic outbursts.

*Symphony No. 6* (1927) suffers from inferior reproduction which gives scant idea of the conductor's dynamic levels — especially in the final movements.

*Symphony No. 7* (1936) has some blurring tone from hall reverberation. The performance is affectionate but not impelling.

*Symphony No. 8* (1937) is the best of the recordings from Vienna. Here, Weingartner's rhythmic fluency is ever apparent and ever appreciable.

*Symphony No. 9* (1935) suffers from the notorious Vienna echo, yet how vital and

imposing this recording remains. In the finale, the chorus is not too well balanced, but the soloists are exceptionally fine — notably the late Richard Mayr. There are many who think Weingartner had the best singers all around, which means chorus also, in this work.

### *The Brahms Symphonies*

Weingartner did not perform Brahms until late in life, and his clear, clean readings of the four symphonies were immediately hailed though they said nothing new on the subject of interpretation. He recorded the *Fourth* first, in 1938; a performance which many today regard as the best on records. Next came the *First* and *Third*, in 1939, both of which are sound musical readings with more contrast in drama in the *Third* than most conductors achieve. The *Second Symphony*, recorded in 1942, remains as fine a performance of this work as any I have heard to date. The reproduction of the Brahms symphonies, all made in London, are unusually fine for their time. —P.H.R.

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## Mahler's 8th Symphony

(Continued from page 266)

tion in the *Veni Creator Spiritus* is lost (one has the feeling that the orchestra was not of a similar size to that of the Philharmonic). The long second part, fully an hour, is done justice to by all concerned, though some of the soloists are not always as pleasing as one might like. The tenor seems to me to be undistinguishable at times from the altos. But one can be grateful for this part in performance — grateful that it has been accomplished with such realism and general nicety of detail. The conductor's effort must be labelled one of love — for he is said to have a great affection for Mahler's music. (It is rumored that Scherchen will record all the Mahler symphonies for another concern.) While the recording has liveness and resonant fullness, there is some distortion on the high end, besides its blemishes in balance.

—P. H. R.

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